Department of LABOR AND INDUSTRIES

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PROVIDER BULLETIN

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THIS ISSUE

Physician Assistants and physical therapy, occupational therapy, and massage therapy.

TO:

Physicians
Osteopathic Physicians
Physician Assistants
Physical Therapists
Occupational Therapists
Massage Therapists
Self-Insured Employers

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Purpose

The purpose of this Provider Bulletin is to communicate a change in the way physical therapy, occupational therapy, and massage therapy are authorized by the State Fund, Self Insurers, and the Crime Victims Program. Previous rules stated that all three health services were authorized only when ordered by the attending physician. An emergency rule was filed May 3rd, 2005 with language that also allowed physician assistants to order these health services for the attending doctor.

The emergency rule is effective May 3rd, 2005.

The full text of the rule change is included in this bulletin.

Process for Public Comment on These New Rules

Since the department wanted to insure timely access to these health services for workers and to remedy any confusion over whether physician assistants could order these health services, emergency rules were filed to expedite the change in the way the insurer authorizes these services. The department will adopt permanent rules on these subjects in the near future. This will allow interested persons to comment on the language of the rules and to allow the department to amend these rules, as needed, based on public comment.

If you would like to comment on the proposed permanent rules when they become available, please send your mailing address to Jamie Lifka at lifk235@lni.wa.gov or call with the same information at (360) 902-4941.

Full Text of the Emergency Rules

The full text of the changes made to the medical aid rules are as follows. Please note that underlined text indicates language that has been added to the rule.

WAC 296-23-220 Physical therapy rules. Practitioners should refer to WAC 296-20-010 through 296-20-125 for general information and rules pertaining to the care of workers.

Refer to WAC 296-20-132 and 296-20-135 regarding the use of conversion factors.

All supplies and materials must be billed using HCPCS Level II codes. Refer to chapter 296-21 WAC for additional information. HCPCS codes are listed in the fee schedules.

Refer to chapter 296-20 WAC (WAC 296-20-125) and to the department's billing instructions for additional information.

Physical therapy treatment will be reimbursed only when ordered by the worker's attending doctor and rendered by a licensed physical therapist or a physical therapist assistant serving under the direction of a licensed physical therapist. In addition, physician assistants may order physical therapy under these rules for the attending doctor. Doctors rendering physical therapy should refer to WAC 296-21-290.

The department or self-insurer will review the quality and medical necessity of physical therapy services provided to workers. Practitioners should refer to WAC 296-20-01002 for the department's rules regarding medical necessity and to WAC 296-20-024 for the department's rules regarding utilization review and quality assurance.

The department or self-insurer will pay for a maximum of one physical therapy visit per day. When multiple treatments (different billing codes) are performed on one day, the department or self-insurer will pay either the sum of the individual fee maximums, the provider's usual and customary charge, or $104.12 whichever is less. These limits will not apply to physical therapy that is rendered as part of a physical capacities evaluation, work hardening program, or pain management program, provided a qualified representative of the department or self-insurer has authorized the service.

The department will publish specific billing instructions, utilization review guidelines, and reporting requirements for physical therapists who render care to workers.

Use of diapulse or similar machines on workers is not authorized. See WAC 296-20-03002 for further information.

A physical therapy progress report must be submitted to the attending doctor and the department or the self-insurer following twelve treatment visits or one month, whichever occurs first. Physical therapy treatment beyond initial twelve treatments will be authorized only upon substantiation of improvement in the worker's condition. An outline of the proposed treatment program, the expected restoration goals, and the expected length of treatment will be required.

Physical therapy services rendered in the home and/or places other than the practitioner's usual and customary office, clinic, or business facilities will be allowed only upon prior authorization by the department or self-insurer.

No inpatient physical therapy treatment will be allowed when such treatment constitutes the only or major treatment received by the worker. See WAC 296-20-030 for further information.

The department may discount maximum fees for treatment performed on a group basis in cases where the treatment provided consists of a nonindividualized course of therapy (e.g., pool therapy; group aerobics; and back classes).

Biofeedback treatment may be rendered on doctor's orders only. The extent of biofeedback treatment is limited to those procedures allowed within the scope of practice of a licensed physical therapist. See chapter 296-21 WAC for rules pertaining to conditions authorized and report requirements.

Billing codes and reimbursement levels are listed in the fee schedules.

WAC 296-23-230 Occupational therapy rules. Practitioners should refer to WAC 296-20-010 through296-20-125 for general information and rules pertaining to the care of workers.

Refer to WAC 296-20-132 and 296-20-135 for information regarding the conversion factors.

All supplies and materials must be billed using HCPCS Level II codes, refer to the department's billing instructions for additional information.

Occupational therapy treatment will be reimbursed only when ordered by the worker's attending doctor and rendered by a licensed occupational therapist or an occupational therapist assistant serving under the direction of a licensed occupational therapist. In addition, physician assistants may order occupational therapy under these rules for the attending doctor. Vocational counselors assigned to injured workers by the department or self-insurer may request an occupational therapy evaluation. However, occupational therapy treatment must be ordered by the worker's attending doctor or by the physician assistant.

An occupational therapy progress report must be submitted to the attending doctor and the department or self-insurer following twelve treatment visits or one month, whichever occurs first. Occupational therapy treatment beyond the initial twelve treatments will be authorized only upon substantiation of improvement in the worker's condition. An outline of the proposed treatment program, the expected restoration goals, and the expected length of treatment will be required.

The department or self-insurer will review the quality and medical necessity of occupational therapy services. Practitioners should refer to WAC 296-20-01002 for the department's definition of medically necessary and to WAC 296-20-024 for the department's rules regarding utilization review and quality assurance.

The department will pay for a maximum of one occupational therapy visit per day. When multiple treatments (different billing codes) are performed on one day, the department or self-insurer will pay either the sum of the individual fee maximums, the provider's usual and customary charge, or $104.12 whichever is less. These limits will not apply to occupational therapy which is rendered as part of a physical capacities evaluation, work hardening program, or pain management program, provided a qualified representative of the department or self-insurer has authorized the service.

The department will publish specific billing instructions, utilization review guidelines, and reporting requirements for occupational therapists who render care to workers.

Occupational therapy services rendered in the worker's home and/or places other than the practitioner's usual and customary office, clinic, or business facility will be allowed only upon prior authorization by the department or self-insurer.

No inpatient occupational therapy treatment will be allowed when such treatment constitutes the only or major treatment received by the worker. See WAC 296-20-030 for further information.

The department may discount maximum fees for treatment performed on a group basis in cases where the treatment provided consists of a nonindividualized course of therapy (e.g., pool therapy; group aerobics; and back classes).

Billing codes, reimbursement levels, and supporting policies for occupational therapy services are listed in the fee schedules.

WAC 296-23-250 Massage therapy rules. Practitioners should refer to WAC 296-20-010 through 296-20-125 for general information and rules pertaining to the care of workers. See WAC 296-20-125 for billing instructions.

Refer to WAC 296-20-132 and 296-20-135 for information regarding use of the conversion factors.

Massage therapy treatment will be permitted when given by a licensed massage practitioner only upon written orders from the worker's attending doctor. In addition, physician assistants may order massage therapy under these rules for the attending doctor.

A progress report must be submitted to the attending doctor and the department or the self-insurer following six treatment visits or one month, whichever comes first. Massage therapy treatment beyond the initial six treatments will be authorized only upon substantiation of improvement in the worker's condition in terms of functional modalities, i.e., range of motion; sitting and standing tolerance; reduction in medication; etc. In addition, an outline of the proposed treatment program, the expected restoration goals, and the expected length of treatment will be required.

Massage therapy in the home and/or places other than the practitioners usual and customary business facilities will be allowed only upon prior justification and authorization by the department or self-insurer.

No inpatient massage therapy treatment will be allowed when such treatment constitutes the only or major treatment received by the worker. See WAC 296-20-030 for further information.

Massage therapy treatments exceeding once per day must be justified by attending doctor.

Billing codes, reimbursement levels, and supporting policies for massage therapy services are listed in the fee schedules.

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